

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 2006

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
BELDEN
GABRIELS
KENNY
SHEEHAN
STEC
MERLINO

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

KATE JOHNSON, COORDINATOR
JOANN CONLEY, ASSISTANT COORDINATOR
PAMELA MORIN, GROUP TOUR/CONVENTION
PROMOTER

REPRESENTING PAUL KAZA ASSOCIATES:

PAUL KAZA
RACHEL CARTER
LISA BOLDWIN

PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY

JOAN PARSONS, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE
AND FISCAL SERVICES

JOAN SADY, CLERK

SUPERVISORS: CAIMANO
F. THOMAS
VANNESS

FRANK O'KEEFE, TREASURER

WILLIAM DUTCHER, AMERICADE

DAVID KING, LAKE GEORGE RV PARK

DAVE STRAINER, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY

AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 11:13 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Gabriels and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the August 29th meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Tourism Coordinator, who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members. As item number one of the agenda, acceptance of the prior meetings minutes, had already been addressed Ms. Johnson began with item number two of the agenda, action items. She advised that the agenda included a request to amend the 2006 County Budget in the amount of \$1,925 to reflect receipt of Whitewater Rafting Brochure advertising revenue.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee. A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.

Proceeding to the second action item, Ms. Johnson stated that also included in the agenda

was a request for a new contract with BQP, Inc. - Brennan's Quick Print, for the re-printing of the Warren County Meetings & Conventions Intro Guide. She said that the term of the contract would be October 16, 2006 through October 31, 2006 for an amount not to exceed \$999.99.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Gabriels and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the October Board meeting. A copy of the request is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Johnson explained that items three and four pertained to handouts included in the agenda packet which were produced by herself, JoAnn Conley, Assistant Coordinator and Pamela Morin,

Group Tour/Convention Promoter. She said that the handouts detailed current activities within the Tourism Department, upcoming Consumer Shows, an update of the 2007 I Love New York Summer Festival and a Motorcoach Update. Ms. Johnson asked the Committee members to review the handouts at their convenience and contact her if there were any questions with respect to the material.

Ms. Johnson introduced Paul Kaza of Paul Kaza Associates and two members of his staff, Rachel Carter and Lisa Boldwin, to address the fifth item of the agenda which was an update on the services provided to Warren County by their firm.

Mr. Kaza began by noting that he and his staff had been absent from the August Committee meetings because those had been devoted primarily to budget preparation and their attendance was not appropriate. He stated that the summer activities performed on behalf of Warren County had been primarily devoted to obtaining video footage and still photography of the various conventions held in the Lake George Region.

Mr. Kaza distributed a report of the agency activities for August of 2006 to each of the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. He said that the summer footage obtained was much more concise than in past years, requiring only one day of shooting as compared to past years when several days were needed. Mr. Kaza said that he felt sufficient footage was produced in the one day shoot eliminating the need for additional funding expenditure. He noted that the Committee would see the results of this work at the end of the presentation when he revealed the video produced by his firm.

Mr. Kaza said that in addition to the video shooting, they were also able to acquire still photography during the one-day shoot, which came at an opportune time as Ms. Johnson was able to use several of the still shots in the new 2007 Travel Guide produced by the Tourism Department. Mr. Kaza noted that, ironically, no beach footage had been obtained during the prior years shoot and he said that they were able to gain several beach shots for future use. He noted that the one-day shoot had yielded upwards of 400 images, which considerably increased the bank of photographs available.

Because his firm was always working one season ahead, Mr. Kaza advised that they had also finished the fall television commercial and had begun planning the winter productions. Mr. Kaza stated that under Mr. Caimano's direction, his firm had released the Conversion Study, disclosed at a prior Committee meeting, to the media. He said that the coverage in the Post Star had been accurate and positive.

Mr. Kaza apprised that he and his staff were constantly evaluating the website, www.visitlakegeorge.com, not only to report the number of people visiting the site but also the length of time they were staying on the site, what pages they visited and ways to make the site more user friendly. In an effort to streamline the distribution of information requested from the website, Mr. Kaza said that a new style of testing was put in place on September 8th that tested the use of the 'Request for Information' page; *(previously online requests for the Travel Guide could only be distributed via U.S. Mail)*. He said that users requesting information were given the choice of receiving either an email version of the 2006 Travel Guide or a hard copy via U.S. Mail.

Mr. Kaza apprised that in a 50/50 rotation over a 12 day period, the new style of receiving an email version of the Guide substantially outperformed the old style in terms of successful conversions. Mr. Kaza distributed a chart to the Committee members supporting the results of his firms research, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. After discussing the results with Ms. Johnson, Mr. Kaza explained, the decision was made to offer both options on the website effective September 19th. He said that the new process was very similar to what other tourism sites were doing and he was very pleased with the results of the new process.

Mr. Kaza introduced his associate Rachel Carter, to give the public relations presentation. Ms. Carter distributed a packet to each of the Committee members which included a plethora of articles printed in various publications concerning Warren County and the Lake George region. Also included in the packet was a spreadsheet listing all of the magazines and newspapers which had published articles related to the area as well as the date the issue was published and the circulation of the publication, Ms. Carter apprised. A copy of all of the information distributed is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Carter gave a brief description of each of the items included in the packet which included articles printed in publications such as The New York Sun, The Boston Globe, New Living Magazine, Forbes Life, Traditional Home Magazine and Everyday with Rachel Ray, just to name a few. She noted that articles referring to the area had also been printed in a Spanish publication distributed in the New York City area and SkyWest Magazine which was available on various airlines.

Ms. Carter apprised that she was constantly working with writers and editors to develop new contacts which allowed her to promote Warren County in new areas. She said that a key tool in developing new contacts had been sending hand written notes to her various

contacts inviting them to the area and notifying them of upcoming events. Mr. Kaza noted that public relations was a very time consuming process which required extensive networking and persistence.

Ms. Carter stated that Eddie Applefeld, a well known broadcaster of a morning drive radio show in the Baltimore area, had visited the Lake George over the summer. Upon returning home, Mr. Applefeld promoted the region in his morning broadcast and Ms. Carter played the promotion for the Committee members. In the clip, Mr. Applefeld gave several statistics of Lake George itself, such as the length of the lake and the number of islands it contained as well as a description of the attractions in the area such as shopping, dining, and sight-seeing. He also advertised the Sagamore Hotel, The Fort William Henry Museum and the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls. Mr. Applefeld recommended that the entire area was worth a trip and closed by referring his listeners to the website www.visitlakegeorgeny.com.

In closing, Ms. Carter said that she was in the process of contacting several different Winter and skiing magazines to invite them to the region for possible exposure in their publications during the winter months.

Ms. Johnson thanked Ms. Carter for her presentation and her enthusiasm in promoting Warren County and the Lake George region.

Mr. Kaza addressed the Committee, reiterating that his firm had completed the Meetings and Conventions video authorized in a previous meeting and he presented it to the Committee members. The seven minute production included promotion of the Lake George region as well as testimonials from attendees and organizers of the various events held in the area. The video received favorable results from the Committee members.

Mr. VanNess said that although he felt the video was very good it lacked footage of the camping facilities available. He suggested that more of those areas be advertised in the video as they were becoming more popular with visitors to the area. Mr. Kaza replied that there were a couple of these types of shots included in the video, one of a family around the campfire and another of a family camping on Turtle Island. David King, of Lake George RV Park, said that Lake Champlain Production had a lot of stock footage they had shot for their business and they would be happy to offer some of that to Mr. Kaza if he wanted to include it in the video. Mr. Kaza advised that they had some stock footage which had been acquired during the previous season which could be included in the video, as well.

Mr. Tessier thanked Mr. Kaza and his staff for their presentation and excused them from the meeting.

Mr. Kaza and his staff left the meeting at 11:55 a.m.

Returning to the agenda, Mr. Tessier noted that item number six pertained to the TPCAC

(Tourism Promotion Citizens Advisory Committee) reorganization. He advised that Mike Pratt of Gore Mountain Ski Center, had requested four at-large members be appointed to the TPCAC to provide feedback as needed, instead of the larger 25+ TPCAC group. Mr. Tessier said that he had received a call from the group requesting a meeting on October 2nd to see how they would be reorganized. Mr. Tessier advised that he intended to be present at the meeting to reflect the County's side of the issue; however, he did not think a four to six member committee was unreasonable. He stated that input from these members on the status of their businesses would assist the Tourism Committee in making decisions for upcoming events.

Item number seven of the agenda, Mr. Tessier advised, was a request from Sam Luciano, Resort Manager - Fort William Henry, to make a power point presentation on the Smith Travel Research findings. He reminded the Committee that in a previous meeting the issue had been referred to the full Board for a decision on when the presentation should be scheduled. Mr. Tessier said it had been suggested that the presentation be made at the next Tourism Committee meeting.

Mr. Tessier advised that the Occupancy Survey mailing conducted by the Tourism and Planning Department would be mailed during the following week to area lodging properties, campgrounds and attractions. He said that for the first time an incentive was being offered for an increase in responses, and all usable responses would receive a copy of the Adirondack Chair poster produced by the Tourism and Planning Department. Mr. Tessier stated that historically they had not received a good response to these mailings and they were an important facet in decisions made by the Committee.

Mr. VanNess stated that he had received complaints from constituents stating that they had not received the surveys and he asked if a report was kept of the responses received. Ms. Johnson replied that a tally of the number received was kept; however, she said, the surveys were anonymous, only requiring disclosure of the community and the type of lodging facility in addition to the percentages the survey asked for. Because an incentive was being offered for valid responses, Ms. Johnson said it was her hope that more detailed information would be received from the surveys.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Caimano stated that the Tourism Department was requesting the creation of a new position entitled Creative Director. Ms. Johnson distributed copies of a resolution request to create the position as well as the job description to the Committee members; copies of both documents are on file with the minutes. Mr. Caimano said that the Department wanted to advertise the position on October 15th, and intended for the position to be filled on January 1, 2007. He noted that Paul Dusek, County Attorney, was in attendance to advise the Committee on the matter.

Mr. Dusek noted that there were always two issues in creating a new position which were whether or not the position would be within the union's bargaining unit and whether it

would be a tested position.

Mr. Dusek said that he and Richard Kelly, Personnel Officer, had researched the requirements of the requested position and found that something quite similar existed within New York State, and the position was entitled Deputy Commissioner. He noted that although the position did not require Civil Service testing, as it was an appointed position, it did require some managerial duties. Mr. Dusek reminded the Committee that the position the Tourism Department was seeking to create was non-managerial with defined tasks within the department, therefore the same title used by New York State may not be suitable.

Mr. Dusek apprised that if the position required testing, a major issue might arise in that it would be difficult to test one's creativity, and there was currently no such test in place, which would require New York State to produce one. However, he said, Mr. Kelly had advised that New York State had many ways to deal with the issue, and Warren County may even be able to petition New York State seeking testing exemption for the position. Because he was unsure of whether or not testing would be required, Mr. Dusek advised that the position would have to be advertised as one requiring testing.

As for inclusion in the union bargaining unit, Mr. Dusek said he assumed that the position would be included because it was clearly non-managerial. However, he noted, if the union felt this position did not fit in with everyone else they were seeking to represent and was not a part of a 'community of interest', it may be excluded from the bargaining unit. Mr. Dusek said he would explore that aspect as well.

Mr. Kenny asked how long it would take to seek an exemption from New York State for the testing and Mr. Dusek said that it would be somewhere in the neighborhood of three months. Mr. Tessier advised that the Committee did not have to wait three months to act on the issue; he added that a referral was needed to move the issue to the Personnel Committee so that the position could be advertised on October 15th as per Ms. Johnson's request.

Mr. Kenny stated that they may have trouble finding a person for the position as potential applicants may be reluctant to leave their current position if civil service testing was required.

Mr. Gabriels suggested that the title of the position be changed to Deputy Director making it exempt from testing, but retaining the non-managerial duties assigned. Mr. Dusek stated that they would be unable to make that change because the Tourism Department did not have a Director; Ms. Johnson's title was Coordinator, he added.

Mr. Gabriels suggested that the title of the new position be changed to Assistant Coordinator and Mr. Dusek advised that he could certainly pursue these suggestions; however, he noted, the Committee would have to make a definite decision on the title and duties of the position because once they had advertised the information they would

need to remain consistent.

Mr. VanNess noted that by Civil Service law, a new employee could not be hired for a managerial position, making them higher up in the chain of command than existing employees. Mr. Dusek agreed, and added that the job description of the position in question included no managerial duties. He advised that they could title the job anything they wanted but in the end New York State would review the job duties and they must match those defined by the title. Mr. Dusek said that in order to move forward with the Deputy title, they would need to alter the job description of the new position to include managerial duties as well as the creative duties requested.

General discussion ensued.

It was the concession of the Committee that the salary of the new position should range between \$45,000 and \$60,000 depending on the qualifications of the applicant.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino to refer the request to advertise for the hiring of a Creative Director with a salary in the range of \$45,000 to \$60,000 depending on qualifications and with the stipulation that the title may be changed upon the recommendations of the Personnel Officer.

Ms. Johnson noted proudly that she had recently received correspondence stating that Lake George was the eighth most popular North American location for which information was requested on the AAA website. Mr. Caimano agreed that this was good news.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Merlino, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist